

NATIVE AMERICAN LIFEWAYS (11,000 B.C. TO PRESENT)

Summary of Theme

The Santa Cruz Valley is one of the longest inhabited places in North America and the homeland of two Native American tribes. Archaeological traces indicate a series of prehistoric cultures flourished in this region between the end of the last Ice Age and the beginning of Spanish colonial activities in the late seventeenth century. The cultural achievements of these prehistoric cultures include the first agriculture, canals, pottery, and villages in the Southwest. This valley has been part of the territory of the Tohono O'odham (People of the Desert) since prehistoric times, and groups of the Yoeme (Yaqui) tribe of western Mexico arrived here in several waves beginning in the early nineteenth century. Today, the cultural traditions of the Tohono O'odham and the Yoemem are celebrated at several annual festivals and craft fairs, and the artifacts of their predecessors are displayed and interpreted in numerous museums and archaeological parks.

Description of Theme

Prehistoric Cultures

Near the end of the Ice Age, about 11,000 B.C., Paleoindian hunters of the Clovis culture traveled the Santa Cruz Valley in search of mammoths and other now-extinct large mammals. Their spear points are currently the oldest evidence of human presence in the region, and they mark the beginning of the long and rich human history of the valley. Traces of a series of prehistoric cultures that flourished during various timespans between about 11,000 B.C. and the late seventeenth century A.D are preserved on and beneath the surface. These cultures included groups of the earliest people on the continent, the first farmers and villagers in the Southwest, unique variants and blends of the Hohokam and Trincheras cultures of the Sonoran Desert, and the first southern Arizona tribe to come in permanent contact with Europeans. All of these prehistoric cultures were centered on the linear oasis created by the river—the common thread through their histories.

Two periods of continent-wide drought occurred during the Clovis time (about 11,500-10,900 B.C.), and a combination of drought and overhunting may explain the extinctions of mammoths, horses, camels, ground sloths, and other large Ice Age animals which correlate with the end of the Clovis culture. Geological and biological evidence indicate water tables rose in southern Arizona during a global period of colder conditions between about 11,000 and 9500 B.C. After this reversion to nearly Ice Age conditions, the climate began to warm rapidly at the beginning of a new global climatic era, the Holocene. A now-extinct form of bison continued to be hunted by late Paleoindian groups in southeastern Arizona and in some other regions in the West.

Scientists debate whether the period of hotter climate between approximately 6500 B.C. and 3500 B.C. was also drier, but the lack of any archaeological sites that can be confidently dated to this interval suggest the Santa Cruz Valley and the rest of the desert lowlands of the Southwest were largely abandoned by people. In southern Arizona, there are also signs that rivers, streams, springs, and lakes dried up, and sand dunes formed and moved with the

wind. Sediment layers show that the downcutting channel of the Santa Cruz River incised the floodplain, while sediments eroded from the surrounding landscape accumulated at the channel margins. Bison, elk, mountain sheep, and pronghorn—the last remnants of the Ice Age fauna—appear to have shifted their ranges to higher elevations or to other regions.

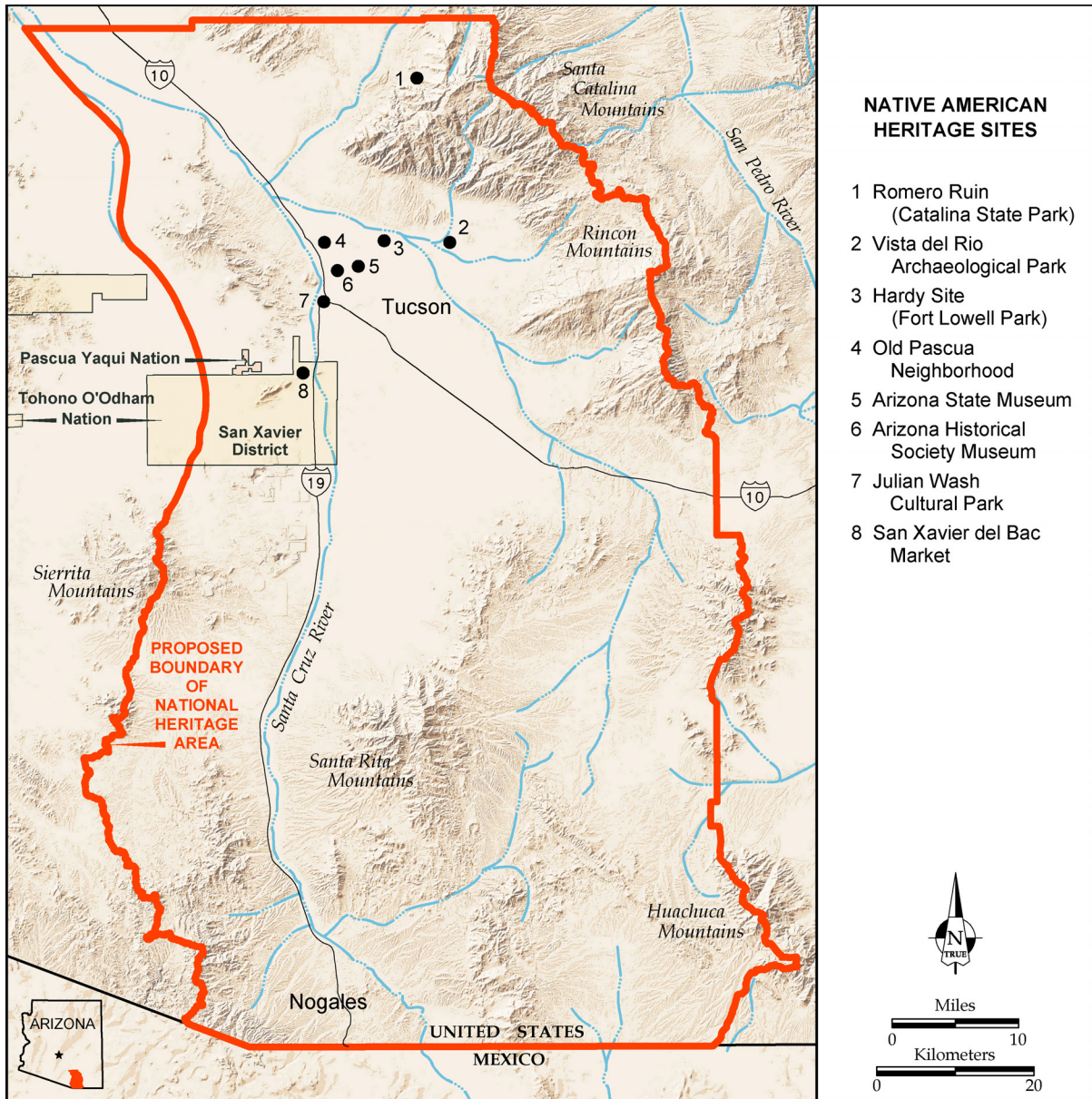
The climate of the Southwest became cooler and wetter about 3000 B.C., the beginning of the late Holocene. Lakes refilled, rivers and springs flowed again, and floodplains began to build up anew. The deep, wide channel of the Santa Cruz River began to fill with fine sediments. Hunter-gatherers returned to the low deserts, and the old way of life was revived, but with increasing reuse of the same locations. Groups repeatedly camped on the banks of the Santa Cruz River during seasonal movements between the uplands and lowlands. Butchered bones found at campsites in the lower and middle Santa Cruz Valley indicate the return of bison to the area (the smaller form living today) and their importance to the hunting and gathering bands of that time.

Direct radiocarbon dates on archaeological maize (corn) remains indicate agriculture arrived in southern Arizona from Mexico by 2000 B.C. To supplement wild resources, hunter-gatherers in the region planted maize and grew some of their food for the first time. These part-time farmers built pithouses and storage pits in summer camps near their fields along the Santa Cruz River and made the first ceramic figurines and pottery in the Southwest. This modest start began 2,000 years of increasing dependence on agriculture and sedentism, a period during which this region was perhaps the foremost center of population and cultural development in the Southwest.

By 1200 B.C., farmers living in early villages along the Santa Cruz River in the western Tucson Basin constructed the earliest known irrigation canals in North America. In addition to maize, they cultivated squash, tobacco, and possibly beans and cotton. Objects resembling spindle whorls for spinning yarn may be evidence that they were also the first cotton weavers in the Southwest. A string of culturally related farming communities along the river maintained close social connections with each other and developed trade connections with distant parts of the Southwest, California, and northern Mexico to acquire volcanic glass for making dart points and seashells for making jewelry. House groups and large, special buildings that appeared in villages along the Santa Cruz River after 800 B.C. are indications that communities were composed of multiple households that were integrated by public meetings and ceremonies. Small stone projectile points suggest the bow-and-arrow began to be used in southern Arizona about this time—earlier than in other regions of the Southwest.

Following a decline in the water table and a cycle of channel downcutting near A.D. 100, new types of architecture, pottery, stone tools, and burial types appeared in the Tucson Basin, perhaps indicating the arrival of a new cultural group from the uplands of the Southwest. If so, overlapping radiocarbon dates mean this new group coexisted for about 100 years with the older farming culture in the valley. Pithouses shifted from round to rectangular about A.D. 400; large villages developed along the Santa Cruz River, with village locations moving to terraces above the floodplain. There, communities grew and developed—some in the same locations for a millennium—as the river flow and floodplain remained stable.

Between roughly A.D. 550 and 750, styles of architecture, artifacts, graphic symbols, and burial practices of the Hohokam culture spread from the Phoenix Basin into the middle Santa Cruz



Native American heritage sites in the proposed National Heritage Area.

Valley and the rest of the Tucson Basin. Plazas became the central features of villages, the largest of which also had Mesoamerican-style ballcourts by about A.D. 800. By A.D. 1000, villages were spread out along expanded canal systems. Ballcourts were no longer built in the Tucson Basin and most other Hohokam areas after about A.D. 1050.

Beginning approximately A.D. 750, villages in the upper Santa Cruz Valley were also influenced by the Trincheras culture centered in Sonora. For the next several hundred years, the valley was a borderland between these two Sonoran Desert cultures, which were blended in local communities. The valley was also a corridor of trade in locally made seashell jewelry, pottery, and probably cotton textiles, as well as macaws and copper items from Mesoamerica.

Near A.D. 1150, many Hohokam villages in the middle Santa Cruz Valley were abandoned and new villages were established, possibly in response to a major cycle of channel downcutting that forced the abandonment of canal systems in the floodplain. After this, new types of runoff farming were developed on the bajadas above the floodplain. Walled compounds and aboveground adobe architecture appeared in the new villages, and platform mounds were built as public ceremonial structures. The population of the region became concentrated in a few large villages by A.D. 1275, perhaps in response to increasing warfare.

Between about A.D. 1400 and 1450, the Hohokam culture of southern Arizona collapsed after a population decline. In the Phoenix Basin, this decline was marked by malnutrition and high mortality rates, perhaps due to overpopulation and a series of droughts punctuated by large floods that destroyed most canal systems. What happened to the Hohokam villages in the middle Santa Cruz Valley is less well understood. To the south, the numbers and sizes of Trincheras villages also began to decline during this period for unknown reasons.

During the period between approximately A.D. 1450 and the 1690s, several related Piman tribes lived in villages in the Santa Cruz Valley. They farmed the floodplain with floodwaters and canals, but also continued to hunt and gather wild plant foods. Their material culture resembled those of other Piman peoples in southern Arizona and northern Sonora. Archaeologists do not currently know much about the people living in southern Arizona during this period, because very few sites have been identified or investigated. However, gaps in the Santa Cruz Valley archaeological record may reflect intervals of abandonment, as appear to have happened in the neighboring San Pedro Valley.

The available archaeological and documentary evidence suggests that, at about the same time in the late seventeenth century, Apaches arrived from the north and began to raid native Piman villages, while Europeans entered the valley from the south. Spanish colonists founded cattle ranches in the upper Santa Cruz Valley in the 1680s, and in the 1690s, Jesuit missionaries started a chain of missions in native villages in the upper and middle valley. With the establishment of these permanent contacts with Europeans who made maps and kept written records, the human story of the Santa Cruz River Valley entered into historical time.

Timeline of Santa Cruz Valley Prehistory

- 11,000 B.C. Paleoindian hunters cross the Tucson Basin in search of mammoths and other now-extinct large mammals at the end of the Ice Age (the Pleistocene). All of the large Ice Age mammals except bison soon disappear in the Southwest, possibly due to a combination of drought and overhunting.

- 9000 B.C. The climate warms at the beginning of a new global climatic era, the Holocene. In southern Arizona, bison continue to be hunted by Paleoindians, while a hunting and gathering (Archaic) adaptation develops. This new lifeway is based on seasonal mobility and foraging for smaller animals, seeds, nuts, and fruits of wild plants, and the use of seed grinding tools.

- 6500 B.C. A long period of hotter, drier climate during the middle Holocene begins; population declines in the lowlands of the Southwest.

- 3000 B.C. The climate of the Southwest becomes cooler and wetter at the beginning of the late Holocene. Hunter-gatherers spread back into the lowlands; foragers camp on the banks of the Santa Cruz River during their seasonal rounds.
- 2000 B.C. Maize (corn) arrives in southern Arizona from Mexico. To supplement wild foods, foragers in the region plant maize to grow some of their food for the first time. They build pithouses and storage pits in summer camps near their fields along the Santa Cruz River and make the first ceramic figurines and pottery in the Southwest.
- 1200 B.C. Farmers in early villages along the Santa Cruz River build the first canals in North America. They grow maize, squash, and possibly beans and cotton, and develop trade with distant parts of the Southwest, California, and northern Mexico to acquire volcanic glass for making dart points and seashells for making jewelry.
- 800 B.C. The first ceremonial buildings in the Southwest are constructed in villages along the Santa Cruz River. Earlier than in other areas of the Southwest, the bow-and-arrow begins to be used in southern Arizona alongside the older spearthrower-and-dart.
- A.D. 100 New types of architecture, pottery, and burial practices suddenly appear in the valley, perhaps representing the arrival of a new cultural group from the uplands of the Southwest.
- A.D. 400 Pithouses shift from round to rectangular, and large villages develop along the Santa Cruz River; village locations move to terraces above the floodplain.
- A.D. 550 Styles of architecture, artifacts, and burial practices of the Hohokam culture, centered in the Phoenix Basin, begin to appear in the Santa Cruz Valley; plazas become central features of villages.
- A.D. 800 The first Mesoamerican-style ballcourts are built in the southern Southwest. Villages with central plazas grow in population in the Santa Cruz Valley. Hohokam styles and iconography from the middle Gila Valley are adopted, and the Trincheras culture in Sonora begins to influence villages in the upper Santa Cruz Valley.
- A.D. 1000 Villages in the valley spread out along expanded canal systems.
- A.D. 1050 Ballcourts are no longer built in Hohokam-influenced areas.
- A.D. 1150 In the middle Santa Cruz Valley, many Hohokam villages are abandoned and new villages are established. Compounds and rectangular, aboveground architecture appear.
- A.D. 1275 Population in the valley concentrates – possibly in response to warfare – into a few large villages. Platform mounds are built as public ceremonial structures within large walled compounds.

- A.D. 1450 The Hohokam culture collapses after a period of population decline due to malnutrition, droughts, and disastrous floods in the Phoenix Basin that destroy major canal systems. The Trincheras culture also begins to fade.
- A.D. 1680 Spaniards arrive from the south and establish cattle ranches in the upper Santa Cruz Valley, and Apaches arrive from the north and begin raiding ranches and native Piman villages along the river.
- A.D. 1691 Father Kino, the first European to visit the middle Santa Cruz Valley, finds villages of Piman-speakers at Guébavi and Tumacácori. The next year, he travels farther north and finds Bac and Chuk-shon.

The Tohono O'odham (People of the Desert)

During the late 1600s, the Jesuit missionary Eusebio Francisco Kino explored the borderland region that now includes northern Sonora and southern Arizona. He and other early Spanish missionaries, explorers, soldiers, and colonists found the region inhabited by the O'odham people, who they called the Pima Altas (Upper Pimas) to distinguish them from the Pima Bajos (Lower Pimas) living in southern Sonora. Among the O'odham, they distinguished several subgroups, including the Sobaipuri of the Santa Cruz and San Pedro river valleys, the Papago of the desert region between the Santa Cruz and Colorado rivers, and the Gileños living along the Gila River to the north. Over the next 300 years, several O'odham groups disappeared as a result of diseases introduced by the Spanish and displacements by colonizing Spanish and raiding Apaches. The Sobaipuri of the San Pedro Valley fled from the Apaches and resettled in the Santa Cruz Valley, where they became integrated with the Papagos, now known as the Tohono O'odham (People of the Desert).

Some modern scholars think the Tohono O'odham are one of the most ancient peoples of southwestern North America, occupying this region for many thousands of years. The Tohono O'odham themselves, and some scholars, trace their origins to the Hohokam culture that flourished in this region between about A.D. 450 and 1450. Another view supported by a few scholars, and also by an oral history version of the origin of the Gila River Pimas recorded in the early 1900s, is that the O'odham migrated from southern Sonora to this region in the 1400s, and then warred with the Hohokam culture, contributing to its collapse. Regardless of which version is accepted, the Tohono O'odham are clearly a very ancient culture of the Sonoran Desert and are part of a chain of related, Piman-speaking cultures that extends from Jalisco in western Mexico to Phoenix, Arizona. Some scholars argue that the Hohokam culture developed as a result of Mesoamerican influences that spread along this corridor of related cultures speaking Piman languages.

From ancient times until the late nineteenth century, the Tohono O'odham lived in dispersed villages (*rancherías*) along low-elevation drainages during the summer to grow crops of corn, squashes, melons, and beans in areas flooded by summer rains. They then moved to villages at higher elevations during the winter to use springs and wells that have water year-round. The saguaro wine festival marks the beginning of the Tohono O'odham year, and it is an

important part of the agricultural cycle. The native Devil's claw plant is cultivated to provide a source of fiber for weaving distinctive coiled baskets.

Today, some 18,000 members of the Tohono O'dham Nation live in three reservations in southern Arizona, including the San Xavier District in the Santa Cruz Valley, established in 1874. Located on the San Xavier District is a Spanish Colonial church completed in 1797, and representing a mixture of baroque and native styles. This church still serves the residents of the district, and the adjacent plaza is used for powwows and craft fairs. Traditional coiled baskets are made by elders, as well as by young people learning the craft. A farmers' cooperative produces and sells native crops near the church. A casino is an important employer and a source of funding for housing, education, and other services.

The Yoemem (Yaquis)

The Yaqui Valley in southern Sonora, Mexico, is the sacred homeland (the *Hiakim*) of the Yoemem people, a native Indian group of northwestern Mexico. Since ancient times, they have planted corn, beans, and other crops in the rich floodplain of the Yaqui River after the annual flood recedes. After Jesuit missionaries converted the Yoemem to Catholicism during the 1600s and 1700s, they also raised livestock introduced by the missionaries. In 1814, Yoemem Indians were brought north to work gold mines near the Guevavi Mission in the Santa Cruz Valley.

The Yoemem homeland was never conquered by the Spanish or Mexican governments. The natives of this region rose up in revolts in 1740, and again when Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821. Warfare lasted throughout the nineteenth century as the Yoemem resisted intrusions by non-Indian settlers supported by the Mexican army. Massive deportations by the Mexican government during the early 1900s led many Yoemem to flee, and they dispersed throughout northwestern Mexico to work in mines and on haciendas, changing their names to hide their identities and abandoning their public religious ceremonies. Many crossed the border into Arizona by following the railroad tracks and working as laborers on the railroad and in cotton fields around Tucson, Phoenix, and Yuma. Anthropologist Edward Spicer noted that by 1910, the Yaquis "had become the most widely scattered native people in North America." The deportation program ended with the Mexican Revolution in 1910, in which the Yoemem fought against the old government.

In southern Arizona and their homeland, the Yoemem gradually resumed their public religious ceremonies, including the Lent and Holy Week ceremonies, which blend indigenous beliefs with Christian symbols. Another important public ritual is the killing-the-deer ceremony (*maso me'ewa*), which takes place on the first anniversary of the death of a relative. Yaqui public rituals are important expressions of ethnic identity, yet they are universal in that they are open to outsiders and seek blessings for all men and women.

Today, the Yoemem have lands in both Mexico and the United States that are formally recognized by the governments. In Mexico, a 1937 decree by the Mexican president created the Yaqui Indigenous Zone along the Rio Yaqui. In the United States, the Pascua Yaqui Association received 200 acres of land southwest of Tucson in 1964. A grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity in 1966 allowed the association to begin building New Pascua Pueblo,

and in 1978, New Pascua gained official recognition as a United States Indian tribe. However, the older Yoemem communities of Pascua and Barrio Libre in Tucson, Yoem Pueblo in Marana, and Guadalupe on the outskirts of Tempe are not recognized by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs. These communities receive help from the tribal government of New Pascua, which earns its own revenues from gaming and hosting events in a new outdoor arena. The Yoemem culture continues to flourish in southern Arizona.

Distinctiveness of Theme

None of the 24 existing National Heritage Areas have a theme related to Native American history and cultural traditions. Such a theme, as outlined here, is central to the long history of the region, and will be unique among National Heritage Areas. Like many regions of the western United States, the Santa Cruz Valley has vibrant Native American communities with deep roots in the region. Celebration of the cultural contributions of Native Americans to the story of this nation is very appropriate and overdue, and the proposed Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area provides an opportunity for this expression.

Related Resources

The Native American history and cultural traditions of this region are interpreted and celebrated at a number of places and events open to the public. In and near Tucson, artifacts and exhibits about prehistoric cultures of the Santa Cruz Valley can be found at the Arizona State Museum and the Arizona Historical Society Museum. Archaeological sites with interpretive trails and outdoor exhibits include the Hardy site at Fort Lowell Park and Romero Ruin at Catalina State Park, and more are being developed at the Julian Wash Cultural Park, Vista del Rio Archaeology Park, and Tucson Origins Heritage Park. Lectures and other local events related to the ancient cultures of this region are held during Arizona Archaeology Month. Tohono O'odham baskets and other crafts can be purchased at the San Xavier del Bac Market and the annual Southwest Indian Art Fair at the Arizona State Museum. Corn, pinyon beans, squashes, and other traditional native crops can be purchased at the San Xavier District Farming Co-op. Native American dancing, drumming, and singing are showcased at the American Indian Heritage Powwow and Craft Fair, the Indian America New Years Competition Powwow, the Native American Heritage Month Powwow, and the Wa:k Powwow. The Yaqui Easter Ceremonies in the Old Pascua neighborhood in Tucson features a week of public ceremonies that includes traditional dancing, music, and masks.

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